Synopsis

Ph.D. in English

Anthropogenic Disparity in Mobility: Activism and Resistance in Select Climate Fiction

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Submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women

Coimbatore

December 2024

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The age of the Anthropocene has been characterised by measuring the scale of human impact as the primary geological force responsible for major climate events. Crutzen and Stoermer bring out the rationale behind the labelling of the epoch of extreme climate events as the 'Anthropocene' due to the "growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales, it seems to us more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term 'Anthropocene' for the current geological epoch." (Stephan and Borkfelt 2) The emphasis on the role of humankind can be attributed to "the arc of the Great Acceleration" that occurred by renouncing ties of community and kinship and is considered to have led to "the extinction of exactly those forms of traditional knowledge, material skills, art and ties of community that might provide succour to vast numbers of people around the world—and especially to those who are still bound to the land—as the impacts intensify." (Ghosh 216) The age of the Anthropocene revolves around large scale disappearance of life forms, resources, and nature as Timothy Morton puts forth: "What is global warming anyway? The correct answer is that it is *mass extinction*." (xiii)

The complexity of the phenomena of climate change required literary and imaginative representations that aid in comprehension, preparation and positive climate action. This led to the birth of the genre of climate fiction that portrayed the complexity of climate change "by imagining its catastrophic consequences (the dystopian mode of cli-fi) or by centering on characters who become involved in political or scientific debates surrounding the climate (the realist mode of cli-fi)." (Caracciolo 10) The emergence of the genre of climate fiction occurred after a widespread realisation of literary representations:

> dealing explicitly with anthropogenic climate change –gives insight into the ethical and social ramifications of this unparalleled environmental crisis, reflects on current political conditions that impede action on climate change, explores how risk materializes and affects society, and finally plays an active part in shaping our conception of climate change. It thus serves as a cultural-political attempt and innovative alternative of communicating climate change. (Mehnert 4)

In 2007, Daniel Bloom coined the term "cli-fi" and proved to be "an indefatigable propagandist on behalf of "cli-fi"" (Milner and Burgmann 1). Consequently large scale attention was shed on the significance of the genre through online campaigns, research, debates and various scholarly discussions. Since 2009, climate fiction's focus on "maintaining an environment in which future generations can flourish have been conducted in a context of latent distrust of bodies such as the IPCC, disillusionment with international negotiations, and stubborn indifference to alarmist scenarios of the future and strident calls for tight state regulation of private consumption and the economy." Contemporary climate fiction "reflects a degree of detachment from catastrophist visions of the future, and to include characters and plots expressing both scepticism about the efficacy of well-meant, but naïve, direct-action eco-activism, and distrust of the political motives of proponents of radically progressive climate policies". (Putra 232-233)

Despite climate fiction's development as a significant genre, it "casts a much smaller shadow within the landscape of literary fiction than it does even in the public arena is not hard to establish." (Ghosh 9) The planetary crisis is portrayed in science fiction and other dystopian imaginaries but the representations of the more than human in the Anthropocene, recognition of the climate hotspots and climate refugees from the global south, the plight of the marginalised and powerless and significantly, the role of politics and capitalist structures in

determining the necropolitics of survival does not acquire enough attention. Ghosh in *Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* puts forth how the future generations will look back upon the age of the "Great Derangement" and "will certainly blame the leaders and politicians of this time for their failure to address the climate crisis. But they may well hold artists and writers equally culpable—for the imagining of possibilities is not, after all, the job of politicians and bureaucrats." (Ghosh 181) Trexler puts forth that the role of climate fiction writers is to provide "'a medium to explain, predict, implore, and lament' the political tensions, ethical conundrums, and psychological dilemmas of climate change." (Putra 238) Such envisioning promotes healthy discussions between the readers thereby providing solace as well as promoting climate action.

The major challenge of climate fiction is "representational: how to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects." (Nixon 3) Such imaginaries will also prompt "ecocritics analysing them to re-think their approaches and (discipline) dominating concepts"(11). Such scholarly focus on climate fiction and climate criticism would enable Mehnert's concept of the "climateculture hybrid" thereby "providing vivid imaginaries that bear justice to the representational challenges, climate change fiction actively shapes how we come to know climate change." (Mehnert 10)

Despite the generic divides and the disciplinary demarcation, climate fiction supersedes the "long-lasting dominance of science in climate change discourses." (Mehnert 4) Both "catastrophic" and "anticipatory" climate fictions (234) portray "everyday milieus touched by climate concerns" that "provide drama, and thereby engage readers' attention in a way which non-fiction cannot replicate without recourse to elements of fictionalisation and personification." Constructing climate events as an identifiable component in setting, plot and character affects the "psychological, emotional, physical, or political experience, and relates

directly to readers' lives." (Putra 234) Such literary engagement is the crux of climate participation and activism.

The research aims at answering the question raised in *Contemporary Fiction and Climate Uncertainty: Narrating Unstable Futures*: "How far does a change in knowledge and imagination entail a change in environmentally destructive modes of life?" (Caracciolo 11). To evoke the appropriate response from the readers, climate fiction writers portray "climate change as a political and social construction as well as a physical reality" (Mehnert 7). Such anthropogenic depictions give rise to the emergence of climate justice movements and activist tendencies.

Climate fiction, firstly portrays the space "to address the Anthropocene's emotional, ethical, and practical concerns" (Putra 229) secondly, subverts "dominant hierarchies of life and worth—placing humans above other species" (Chao et al., 3) and lastly, brings to light the "The uneasy relationship between ecological concerns and democracy" (Carter 53). The plots analyse the scale of injustices as climate injustice is "often more tangible than justice" (Chao et al., 2). The thesis aims to focus on the notion of multispecies justice in the Anthropocene by countering "historical disregard for the interests and capacities of other species" (Stephan and Borkfelt 1) through a recognition of their agency and capabilities. The research advocates for a transition from the age of the 'Anthropocene', which centres on the human to Haraway's concept of 'Chthulucene' which focusses on species interconnectedness and kinship thereby opening up the modern climate change discourse towards multispecies inclusivity and multispecies inclusive climate justice.

The select climate fiction: Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*, Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*, John Lanchester's *The Wall* and Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* can be considered as "literature of ecological refugeeism" (Buell 121) as they all feature human and

more than human climate refugees and the discourse of free mobility for survival. The depiction of activism and resistance in the chosen literary texts and in the core chapters bring out how climate movements are different from other activist movements as there is less time, resources and aid, and as Ghosh puts forth climate activism fails to gain momentum due to the "security establishments around the world have already made extensive preparations for dealing with activism." (Ghosh 214, 215)

Objectives:

The objectives of the study are:

- to explore climate activism amidst the shifting geopolitical topography of global and intergenerational disparities caused due to the disproportionate impact of climate change
- to elucidate the forms of activism against environmental racism
- to analyse how community engagement promotes conservation and rehabilitation for the victims of climate change
- to explicate expressions of passive resistance against environmental totalitarianism
- to validate collective efforts to secure climate futures of climate migrants and conservation of communities

Primary Texts:

The proposed research offers a theoretical and critical investigation of the following works:

- Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019)
- Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* (2012)
- John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019)
- Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* (2015)

The select texts belong to diverse genres of literary, historic, dystopian, and political climate fiction and also render the representations of human and more than human climate

refugees. The wide range of representations of the anthropogenic crisis and climate induced displacement offers a wider scope for analysing the magnitude of the crisis and the need for the establishment of climate justice at every stage of the impending crisis. The literary narratives extend a multispecies inclusive, equitable, and significant representation of the crisis of climate induced displacement which has enabled the researcher to effectively fulfil the objectives framed for the proposed research.

Relevance and Significance of the Research Area:

The research area holds relevance in the present day scenario as it critically engages with contemporary politics, inequities, refugee crisis, species endangerment, and climate disasters. The select fiction depict plots based on real life events such as the crisis of the Sundarbans, a climate hotspot in the Global South in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*; the anthropogenic toxification in the migration pathways of the Monarch Butterflies in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*; heightened border security with reference to the 2015 refugee crisis, U.S Mexico border wall and Hungarian border fence in John Lanchester's *The Wall*; water scarcity due to drying up of Colorado river in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife.* The characters in the select novels express activism and resistance through community engagement and climate action thereby sensitising the issue of multispecies inclusive climate justice.

The significance of the research lies in the critical approach and the research argument formulated for the select climate fiction. The research critically examines the select climate fiction based on their representations of the Anthropocene, portrayal of the necropolitics of survival, the plight of climate refugees and the need for climate justice. The uniqueness of the study primarily lies in the formulation of the research topic that sheds exclusive focus on the activist measures for climate justice inclusive of multispecies inhabitants. The theoretical framework of the chosen research is significant as it examines the micro politics of the

Anthropocene by dealing with intergenerational inequities, postcolonial racism, climate apartheid, more than human agency, kinship and the rise of climate regimes.

Research Gap:

Review of literature of literary research on the environment and research on climate fiction aided in the identification of the research gaps such as climate hotspots in the Global South and the Global North, study of diverse themes including dystopian and realistic themes, inclusive representation of more than human and human climate refugees, focus on anthropogenic politics and the disparities in migration, and the need for activism and resistance for climate justice. The research gaps are addressed in the thesis through an equitable representation of anthropogenic politics and disparities in the migration trajectories of human and more than human species to put forth the need for activism to ensure climate justice.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology:

This research is a qualitative research, grounded on a text based analysis of the select texts which is theoretical and analytical. The research methodology adopted in the thesis analyses the necropolitics of survival in a climatically altered future and probes into the undercurrents of resistance and activism to establish climate justice. The research interrogates the politics of climate change and the findings are formulated based on the theoretical foundation of environmental justice ecocriticism and climate justice.

Documentation and Citation:

Methodology advocated by ***MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper, 9th Edition*** has been followed closely by the researcher for the purpose of documentation and citation.

Structure of the Thesis:

- Chapter I- Introduction
- Chapter II- Climate Justice in the Anthropocene: A Theoretical Perspective
- Chapter III- Environmental Justice Activism: Disparity in Displacement amidst Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*
- Chapter IV- Community Based Activism for Conservation and Sustenance in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*
- Chapter V- Countering Eco Fascism: Subversion and Survival in John Lanchester's *The Wall*
- Chapter VI- Resisting Technocapitalism: Security and Rights of Migrants in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife*
- Chapter VII- Conclusion

The first chapter titled **"Introduction"** exhibits the trajectory of climate change fiction as a genre that depicts the politics, impact and futurity of the Anthropocene. It also constructs a background of the climate criticism adopted to analyse the genre of Anthropocene fictions. The chapter introduces the research strategy, the purpose of the research and the objectives of the conducted research by tracing the step wise progress of the research idea. The review of literature is provided to bring out the significance of the study and the existing research gap. The chapter also provides an introduction of the select primary texts and chosen authors for the research through a discussion of the structure of the thesis and chapter divisions.

The second chapter titled **"Climate Justice in the Anthropocene: A Theoretical Framework"** elucidates the theoretical framework chosen for the conduct of the research. The chapter extends the evolution of the field of environmental criticism through the planetary transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene. The major themes of climate fiction are scrutinised to comprehend the appropriate theoretical foundation that can be adopted to

critique, and justify the objectives of the tenets of climate fiction. The agency of the human and the more than human characters, the political dynamics in a climatically altered world, the necropolitics of survival of climate refugees, and the concept of climate justice that is inclusive, immediate, and equitable is brought out in the theoretical discussion. The theoretical discourse of climate justice as a focal point of analysis of the select texts is extrapolated through the theoretical objectives framed for each core chapter.

The third chapter titled **"Environmental Justice Activism: Disparity in Displacement amidst Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*"** examines the kinds of resistance employed to bridge the global disparities caused due to the distributive injustice of climate change. The chapter brings to the surface the intricate complexities of climate change phenomena and its ability to transcend time place, and all humanly divides. Through the depiction of the climate crises of the Sundarbans which through a progression of events connects it to the global situation, the chapter aims to expose the injustices that victimise the climate refugees and also delve into activist measures undertaken by the community and the migrants themselves to ensure climate justice.

Ghosh's perspective of how climate change is not only a crisis of the ecology but it is also "a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination" (Ghosh 12) is discussed through the depiction of "the time of the Great Derangement" (Ghosh 15) in *Gun Island*. It also renders an analysis of how the disproportionate impact of climate change and the unfair deposition of climate debt on the third world countries create the figure of the climate migrant as a victim of climate apartheid. The impact of postcolonial racism in restricting the mobility of migrants from third world countries is brought out to educate the readers to disseminate climate justice of differentiated duties. Through Ghosh's Eco-political thought, the chapter establishes a non-Eurocentric climate discourse that is inclusive, non-anthropocentric and equitable. The call for

climate justice by the characters in the novel is inclusive of the participation of the more than human inhabitants of the planet. Such a multispecies inclusive articulation for climate justice offers a ground that challenges anthropocentric values and counters it with moral considerability and ecological accountability. It delves into the power dynamics, shifting agency, restricted mobility, activism and explores the futurities of the multispecies climate refugees.

The fourth chapter titled **"Community Based Activism for Conservation and Sustenance in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*"** explicates the role of community engagement in promoting conservation and ensuring rehabilitation of the monarch butterflies as victims of climate change altered migration trajectory. The chapter signals the interconnectedness and kinship of the human and the more than human by drawing a parallel between personal collapse and ecological collapse. This chapter sheds its focus on the displacement of the more than human: environment and its inhabitants and posits mobility as an agential right that seeks sustenance. The spotlight of climate discourse falls on the plight of the species of monarch butterflies which debunks anthropocentric pride, offers representations of the more than human as active agents of action instead of being a meagre backdrop to human action, thereby signalling the need for multispecies inclusive climate justice.

The urgency for climate justice is discussed through an interpolation of the transition from climate denialism to climate awareness through the perspective of affective ecocriticism and environmental justice. The characters in the novel undertake climate action by battling climate denial, anthropocentric bias and establishing kinship. The role of community engagement in imparting kinship and undertaking effective climate coping measures to conserve and protect the futurity of the species of monarch butterflies offers a demand for multispecies inclusive climate change discourse that prioritises geo-ethics and biocentrism.

The fifth chapter titled **"Countering Eco Fascism: Subversion and Survival in John Lanchester's *The Wall*"** analyses the politics of the totalitarian regime and its imposition of eco fascist policies which is subverted through the characters' resistance. The chapter brings to light the question of ethics, the materialisation of risks and the politics of the anthropocene. The dystopian depiction of climate change puts forth political instability and the necropolitics of survival of climate refugees. The fictional world is fragmented into factions that transcend time, place and borders thereby heightening national security to restrict "climate refugees seeking a safe haven in the few parts where the climate is tolerable and food is available". (Mehnert 185)

The wall in the novel symbolises the practise of xenophobia, exclusion and militant national security. The chapter scrutinises how the anthropogenic events "are profoundly practical and that challenge our received political institutions and imaginations at the same time" (Chakrabarty 13). The subversion of the fascist authority through acts of resistance by the characters address the inequalities that are exacerbated due to climate change, climate racism, capitalism, resource conflicts and other grounds of injustices.

The sixth chapter titled **"Resisting Technocapitalism: Security and Rights of Migrants in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife*"** scrutinises the acts of resistance exhibited by climate migrants through border defying mechanisms in a society altered by techno capitalism to counter the impact of climate induced resource conflict. The anthropogenic crisis depicted in the novel revolves around the debate about labelling the age as the 'Capitalocene' instead of the Anthropocene. The capitalist climate coping measures and the manufacturing of risks lead to disparities in the political, social and economic spheres thereby aggravating the impact of the anthropogenic crisis. The resource induced conflicts in the novel lead to

deregulaization, privatization and the concentration of power in a few creates a Darwinian struggle for survival.

The chapter examines the role of technocapitalism in the emergence of the necropolitics of climate refugees. The struggles undergone by the climate refugees who are victimised by the climate crisis, climate induced resource conflict, government policy changes, militant security measures, and illegal water knife measures are analysed through the demarcation of sacrifice zones. The collective and individual efforts taken by the characters to emancipate themselves from a network of corporate and capitalist colonisation are analysed. The activism put forth by the characters in overturning the hegemony of technocapitalism through border defying mechanisms, resistance and their calls for climate justice is evaluated through their emancipative trajectory.

The final chapter titled **"Conclusion"** culminates with an extension of the findings of the research, the theoretical observations of the thesis and the scope for further study. The chapter provides a brief account of the justification of the research objectives formulated and the research findings that are documented.

Research Findings:

- The politics of the Anthropocene and the challenges ranging from inequities, disparities, discrimination and victimisation of climate refugees are discussed

- The role of socio-political tensions, geographical and intergenerational disparities and psychological transformations that propel the need for climate awareness and activism are examined

- The political, ethical and ecological ramifications of climate events are elucidated through the emergence and outcome of activism seeking multigenerational and equitable climate justice for climate refugees

- The impact of postcolonial racism and climate apartheid in determining the migration trajectory of the climate refugees is expounded

- The concept of climate justice is reevaluated by decentring the figure of the human to impart multispecies inclusivity and more than human agency

- Non anthropocentric approach is formulated to impart climate awareness and the need for the transition from the Anthropocene to the Chthulucene

- Through equitable representation, effective analysis and an inclusive theoretical framework, the thesis attempts to bring to the forefront the crux of ecological thought: kinship, coexistence and multispecies inclusive justice

Contribution to Academia:

The thesis critically engages with current climate events and inequities arising due to the disproportionate impact of climate change. The role of literary cultural expressions in articulating planetary futures has been impactful due to the impact in putting forth climate consciousness to the readers. The select climate fiction are forms of activism as they express the possibilities of the anthropogenic crises and the urgency of climate action encompassing multispecies inclusivity. By selecting fictions that have dismantled the silence in literature and theoretical frameworks that seek to address issues of injustice, the thesis instills climate consciousness in society.Through theoretical dimensions and perspectives that critically engage with the climate crises, the thesis seeks to contribute to the field of academia.

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